

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NATO 07352

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO

SUBJECT: MARITIME EXERCISE INFORMATION GROUP (MEIG)

REF: (A) 74 USNATO 6017 DTG 291905Z OCT 74, (B) 74 USNATO
6820 DTG 061340Z DEC 74, (C) USNATO 5861 DTG 231200Z JUN
77, (D) STATE 57394 DTG 152018Z MAR 77, (E) STATE 136972
DTG 140129Z JUN 77, (F) USNATO 308 DTG 191903Z JAN 77,
(G) STATE 20464 DTG 290042Z JAN 77, (H) USNATO 2777 DTG
061323Z MAY 77, (I) STATE 169761 DTG 202242Z JUL 77 (NOTAL)

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SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE REVIEWS ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL ALLIED
OBJECTIONS TO CINCHAN OR CINCENASTLANT CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE
MARITIME EXERCISE INFORMATION GROUP (MEIG), PREDICTS THAT,
ALTHOUGH NOW TEMPORARILY DORMANT, ACTIVE DISCUSSION WILL
RESUME IN SEPTEMBER AND RECOMMENDS A COORDINATED STATE-
DEFENSE REVIEW OF THIS SUBJECT. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHING-
TON GUIDANCE BY AUGUST 26, 1977. END SUMMARY.

1. IN OCTOBER 1974 (REF A), WE REPORTED VIEWS OF THE NETH-
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ERLANDS AND DENMARK, WHICH, BECAUSE OF POLITICAL SENSI-
TIVITY OF OUT-OF-AREA OPERATIONS, SOUGHT TO REMOVE THE NATO
LABEL FROM THE GROUP. EVENTUALLY THEY PREVAILED, AND THE
NAME OF THE "NATO MARITIME COORDINATION GROUP" WAS CHANGED
TO ITS PRESENT FORM, THE "MARITIME EXERCISE INFORMATION
GROUP". THEN, IN DECEMBER 1974, THE MEIG INITIATIVE WAS
EFFECTIVELY SHELVED, LARGELY BECAUSE OF UK SENSITIVITY OVER

SIMONSTOWN AND DEFENSE REVIEW ISSUES (REF B). REF B (PARA 5) ALSO REPORTED: (1) THE DANISH CONCERN OVER THE CONTROVERSY WHICH HAD BEEN CREATED BY NAVAL EXERCISES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WHERE LITTORAL STATES HAD CRITICIZED SOME NATO NATIONS FOR BEING INVOLVED; AND (2) THE DANISH PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE CURRENT CHAIRMANSHIP FORMULATION TO FURTHER WEAKEN THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE MEIG AND NATO, AND, BY SO DOING, TO MAKE IT POLITICALLY MORE ACCEPTABLE. THE PROPOSED TEXT, WHICH REOPENED ACTIVE CONSIDERATION OF THE MEIG IN JANUARY 1977, CONTAINED IN ITS PARA 2 THE CONTROVERSIAL PHRASE, "...CHAIRMANED BY ONE OF THE PARTICIPATING NATIONS...", A CHANGE WHICH THE US DID NOT SUPPORT (REF B) AND A CHANGE FROM THE BASIC MILITARY COMMITTEE DECISION, MC 232, WHICH CALLED FOR THE GROUP TO ACT UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF CINCHAN.

2. MORE RECENT ALLIED COMMENTS (REF C) WERE GENERAL, CITING EXTREME SENSITIVITY IN SOME GOVERNMENTS (PARTICULARLY DENMARK, NORWAY AND THE NETHERLANDS) TO ANY ACTIVITY WHICH TIES NATO TO ACTIVITY BEYOND ITS RECOGNIZED GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES. THE ALLIED OBJECTIONS ARE NOT TO MILITARY CHAIRMANSHIP, BUT ARE AN ATTEMPT TO PLAY DOWN THE FACT THAT A NATO MILITARY COMMANDER WILL BE DIRECTING THE MEIG FUNCTIONS, WHICH INCLUDE EXCHANGING INFORMATION ON MARITIME OPERATIONS OUTSIDE NATO'S BOUNDARIES.

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3. PART OF OUR DIFFICULTY IN HANDLING PO/77/80 IS THAT THE US HAS APPEARED TO HAVE CHANGED ITS EMPHASES IN MID-STREAM. REF F DID NOT RAISE THE CURRENT NATIONAL CHAIRMANSHIP ISSUE BUT DIRECTED US TO PROPOSE THAT THE GROUP BE UNDER THE AEGIS OF CINCEASTLANT RATHER THAN CINCHAN. REF D ACCEPTED THE PO, BUT RETURNED TO THE CHAIRMANSHIP ISSUE BY STATING THAT IT WAS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT MILITARY AUTHORITIES WOULD CHAIR THE GROUP. REF E SIGNIFICANTLY HARDENED THE US POSITION BY EXPANDING UPON OUR EARLIER INSISTENCE THAT CINCHAN OR CINCEASTLANT CHAIR THE GROUP, AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THIS ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS BEGAN IN JANUARY 1977, REOPENED THE ENTIRE ISSUE OF THE DE-NATOIZING PROCESS THAT THE MEIG HAD UNDERGONE.

4. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP THIS ISSUE ON THE BACK BURNER NOW THAT A PO ON THE MEIG HAS BEEN CIRCULATED. THERE IS CONTINUED PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF TO RESOLVE THE US RESERVATION, INCLUDING A SUGGESTION THAT WE MOVE THE ISSUE TO THE DPC AGENDA. WE SEE LITTLE HOPE OF SIMPLY DROPPING THE ISSUE, AND WE CAN ANTICIPATE FURTHER EFFORTS ON THE PART OF CONCERNED ALLIES (AS REPORTED REF C) TO INFLUENCE THE US POSITION. WE ARE IN A QUIESCENT PERIOD

NOW BECAUSE OF THE NATO HOLIDAY BREAK. ALTHOUGH THE MEIG IS UNDERSTANDABLY OVERSHADOWED BY OTHER NATO PROBLEMS, WE CAN EXPECT RENEWED PRESSURE TO RESOLVE THE STATUS OF THIS PO IN SEPTEMBER WHEN THE NATO COMMITTEE SYSTEM RETURNS TO A FULL WORK SCHEDULE.

5. DESPITE ASYG MUMFORD'S EARLIER REPORT ON THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE PO TO SACLANT AND CINCHAN (REF I), IT IS APPARENT THAT SACLANT AND US MILITARY AUTHORITIES DO NOT DESIRE TO HAVE AN MEIG CONSTITUTED ALONG THE LINES PROVIDED

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IN THE CURRENT PO. HOWEVER, NATO POLITICAL AUTHORITIES ARE NOW SEIZED WITH THE PROBLEM AND MUST CONCLUDE THEIR DELIBERATIONS BEFORE RETURNING THE MEIG INITIATIVE TO THE MILITARY.

6. WE BELIEVE THE US SHOULD AVOID LETTING THE MEIG ISSUE (1) DAMAGE OTHER IMPORTANT ONGOING MARITIME EFFORTS, SUCH AS PROTECTION OF NATO SHIPPING OUTSIDE THE ACLANT AREA (PO/77/2) WHICH ALSO MUST DEAL WITH THIS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE NATO OUT-OF-AREA ISSUE, AND (2) IMPACT NEGATIVELY ON THE LONG-TERM INITIATIVES TASK FORCE ON NATO'S MARITIME POSTURE. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CURRENT NATO HOLIDAY LULL BY CONDUCTING A COORDINATED STATE-DEFENSE REVIEW OF THIS SUBJECT. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON GUIDANCE BY AUGUST 26, 1977. PEREZ

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